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ORGANIZATION MANUAL

A description of the
functions and organization of

THE CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

SECRETARY-GENERAL'S BULLETIN

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SECRETARY-GENERAL'S BULLETIN

To: Members of the Staff

Subject: CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

1. This bulletin describes the current organization and functions of the Centre for Human Rights.

2. Documents ST/SGB/Organization, Section S/Amend.2 of 29 November 1977, ST/SGB/Organization, Section S/Add.1/Amend.1 of November 1977 and ST/SGB/194 of 28 July 1982 are hereby superseded.

Boutros BOUTROS-GHALI
Secretary-General

CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

An overview

The Centre for Human Rights is the principal arm of the United Nations Secretariat in promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms as envisaged in the Charter of the United Nations.

From 1946 to 1982, secretariat services for United Nations bodies dealing with human rights were provided by the Division of Human Rights, a unit which was located in various departments, i.e., the Department of Social Affairs, the Office of Special Political Affairs and the Office of Political and General Assembly Affairs.

By its resolution 35/194 of 15 December 1980, the General Assembly called upon the Secretary-General to redesignate the Division of Human Rights as a Centre when he deemed it appropriate. Effective 28 July 1982, the Division was redesignated as a Centre. In 1987, in a move to upgrade the status of the Centre, the Secretary-General decided to designate the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva, as the head of the Centre for Human Rights.

As a result of further restructuring in 1993, an Assistant Secretary-General was appointed as the head of the Centre for Human Rights. Effective June 1993, the Assistant Secretary-General of the Centre reports directly to the Secretary-General.

Mandates

Provides secretariat services to United Nations organs such as the General Assembly and its Third Committee, the Economic and Social Council and its Social Committee, the Commission on Human Rights and the Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the Committee against Torture, the Committee on the Rights of the Child and any other intergovernmental body established in this area;

Serves as a focal point in the field of human rights;

Carries out research and studies on human-rights-related issues;

Ensures that a system-wide coordinated approach on human rights dimensions of peace-making, peace-keeping, preventive diplomacy, racism, racial discrimination, marginalized indigenous populations, migrant workers and minorities is adopted;

Conducts studies, prepares reports and follows up on the implementation of human rights instruments and standards;

Promotes the ratification and application of international conventions on human rights;

Undertakes fact-finding and investigative missions at the request of the policy-making organs or the Secretary-General on a reported situation and prepares confidential reports for the Commission on Human Rights or the Secretary-General;

Administers the programme of advisory services and technical assistance in the field of human rights;

Collects and disseminates information in the field of human rights and prepares relevant publications and reference materials and coordinates liaison with non-governmental, inter-governmental and governmental organizations active in this field.

Organizational elements and their functions

A. ASSISTANT SECRETARY-GENERAL

Performs the functions of a Head of Office, as described in the introductory section of the Manual, and directs the activities of the Centre. In addition:

Establishes and maintains contacts with Governments of the States members of the Commission for Human Rights, the Economic and Social Council, the Third Committee of the General Assembly and related legislative bodies;

Makes recommendations to the Secretary-General as a focal point on human rights policy and coordinates the human rights policies and programmes with related activities system-wide, as well as with governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations at the international and regional levels;

Ensures substantive servicing of the Commission on Human Rights, its subsidiary organs and the bodies established under human rights treaties;

Acts as a coordinator for the Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination;

Represents the Secretary-General at meetings of human rights organs and at other human rights events and ensures harmonious relationships with the States members;

Promotes the ratification and application of international conventions on human rights;

Assists in the exercise of human rights good offices undertaken by the Secretary-General;

Oversees the preparation and presentation of the annual report of the Secretary-General to the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly.

A.1. Office of the Assistant Secretary-General

The Office of the Assistant Secretary-General performs the functions of a staff office as described in the introduction of the Manual. In addition, it provides assistance to the Head of the Centre in the promotion and protection of human rights among the world community, non-governmental organizations, specialized agencies and regional and interregional institutes.

A.1.a Administrative Unit

Is responsible for maintenance of voluntary funds and overseeing of the automation programme of the Centre;

Assists the Assistant Secretary-General and other officials of the Centre in the discharge of their financial, personnel and general administrative responsibilities, as described in the introductory section of the Manual.

A.2. Liaison Office at Headquarters

At the request of the Assistant Secretary-General:

Represents the Centre for Human Rights at relevant meetings held in New York;

Facilitates communication and liaison between the Centre for Human Rights, the Office of the Secretary-General and other departments and offices at Headquarters;

Provides regular briefings and information exchange for permanent missions to the United Nations;

Liaises with non-governmental organizations, academic institutions and the press at Headquarters;

Prepares briefings for the Office of the Secretary-General and recommends good offices action by the Secretary-General in individual cases;

Informs the Centre of substantive developments at Headquarters relating to human rights.

B. DIRECTOR

Acts as a focal point for the substantive coordination of the work programme of the Centre and assists the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights;

Represents the Centre, at the request of the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, at seminars, symposia, colloquia and other meetings;

Assists the Head of the Centre in developing policy recommendations for initiatives by the Secretary-General for system-wide policy on human rights and for good offices interventions;

Develops the modalities for early-warning action to prevent human rights violations and makes recommendations in that regard;

Oversees the preparation of the medium-term plan and the programme budget for the Centre;

Provides assistance to the Head of the Centre in coordinating system-wide activities relating to human rights elements of preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peace-keeping operations;

Advises the Assistant Secretary-General of the Centre on all policy matters related to programme management, personnel action and programme coordination;

Assists the Assistant Secretary-General of the Centre in coordination of activities related to the Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination;

Supervises and directs the programme activities of the International Instruments Branch of the Centre and ensures that all required technical and substantive services for the meetings of the States parties are provided;

Provides advice on financial and administrative issues and undertakes special assignments as requested by the Assistant Secretary-General.

The organizational structure of the Centre for Human Rights consists of five substantive Branches and one Unit as follows:

1. COMMUNICATIONS BRANCH

Ensures the implementation of various existing procedures for dealing with communications concerning alleged violations of human rights (e.g., complaints, appeals, petitions), based on international instruments and resolutions of policy-making organs;

Processes communications concerning allegations of violations of human rights under existing confidential or public procedures such as the procedure governed by Economic and Social Council resolution 728 F (XXVIII) and 1503 (XLVIII), the Optional Protocols to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, for submission to the relevant organs;

Services the human rights bodies concerned with the implementation of the above-mentioned procedures, including the Commission on Human Rights and its Working Group on Situations, the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities and its Working Group on Communications; the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the Human Rights Committee and its Working Group on Communications and the Committee against Torture;

Provides secretariat services for specific direct contact missions under the confidential procedure governed by the Economic and Social Council resolution 1503 (XLVIII).

2. SPECIAL PROCEDURES BRANCH

Provides substantive services to the investigative and fact-finding organs (working groups and/or special rapporteur) set up by the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Commission on Human Rights in the implementation of public procedures for dealing with global or specific situations of human rights;

Deals with urgent communications addressed to the above-mentioned organs and assists them in operating their respective procedures for urgent action in cases of reported violations of human rights;

Organizes and provides substantive servicing for field missions, decided upon by the above-mentioned fact-finding or investigative organs, and for meetings at which relevant reports are discussed;

Provides secretariat services to the Working Group on South Africa;

Provides secretariat services to the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, deals with its urgent communications and assists the Working Group in cases of reported disappearances requiring urgent action;

Prepares and advises on good offices and humanitarian interventions.

3. INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS BRANCH

Follows the implementation of international human rights treaties, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid, the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child;

Provides substantive servicing for the human rights organs functioning under the above-mentioned international treaties;

Provides substantive servicing for the meetings of States parties to the above-mentioned international human rights conventions;

Provides secretariat services to the Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery and the Board of Trustees of the Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture;

Provides assistance in the preparation of general comments and guidelines as required by the above-mentioned treaties and treaty bodies.

4. LEGISLATION AND PREVENTION OF DISCRIMINATION BRANCH

Assists in the preparation of international instruments on human rights and other standard-setting activities by human rights organs;

Provides substantive services to human rights organs engaged in standard-setting activities;

Implements the Programme of Action for the Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination;

Drafts guidelines concerning structural adjustment on economic, social and cultural rights to serve as a base for a continued dialogue between human rights bodies and the international financial institutions;

Provides substantive assistance to Special Rapporteurs appointed by the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities;

Maintains contact and coordination with Governments, intergovernmental organizations, specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations;

Conducts research and studies in the field of administration of justice, environment, contemporary forms of slavery, discrimination against women, children, migrant workers, and ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities;

Provides substantive services to the Board of Trustees of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Populations.

4.1 Meetings Coordination Unit

Under the supervision of the Chief of the Legislation and Prevention of Discrimination Branch, the Meetings Coordination Unit:

Ensures timely processing and submission of documents, studies and reports requested by various human rights organs such as the Commission on Human Rights, the Sub-Commission on Human Rights and the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities;

Provides secretariat services for the Commission on Human Rights and the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities;

Provides secretariat servicing to the meetings of all other organs dealing with human rights issues;

Assists in the organization and servicing of seminars, workshops, symposia and emergency meetings convened by the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities.

5. TECHNICAL ADVISORY SERVICES AND PUBLICATIONS BRANCH

Administers the programme of technical assistance projects as requested by the Commission on Human Rights and other legislative bodies of the United Nations by providing

assistance in revision of national legislation and establishment of national institutions for the protection and promotion of human rights;

Provides advisory services on the implementation of international human rights standards and norms at the national level and specific human rights issues;

Supervises the administration of the fellowship programme, training seminars and the provision of technical information to Governments in establishing or strengthening national infrastructures for the promotion and protection of human rights;

Coordinates activities related to the promotion and protection of human rights with other Secretariat offices, specialized agencies and institutes through regular exchange of information, publication and research works;

Administers the Voluntary Fund for Technical Cooperation in the field of human rights;

Is responsible for the publication of the Yearbook of the United Nations and of the documentation prepared by the Centre for educational, training and information purposes.

Assists the Office of the Assistant Secretary-General in the conduct of its activities related to external relations and the promotion of human rights.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS